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ABSTRACT

Guidelines and principles concerning the role of non-Catholic parents, teachers, and students in Catholic schools are discussed in two articles. In recent years in the United States the number of non-Catholic teachers and, especially, of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools has grown. Non-Catholic enrollment has increased from 2.7 percent in 1970 to 10.6 percent in 1983. In the first article, "The Schools as an Evangelizing Community: Guidelines regarding Teachers, Pupils and Parents," the Reverend James Hawker examines the nature, mission, and responsibility of the Catholic church and discusses things to consider in the hiring of a non-Catholic teacher in a Catholic school, criteria for the admission of non-Catholic pupils, and topics which should be discussed with non-Catholic parents. In the second article, "Religious and Cultural Variety: Gift to Catholic Schools," Sister Thea Bowman stresses that the presence of non-Catholics in Catholic schools can help children learn about and appreciate other religions and, thus, better prepare them for life in a pluralistic, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural world. (RM)

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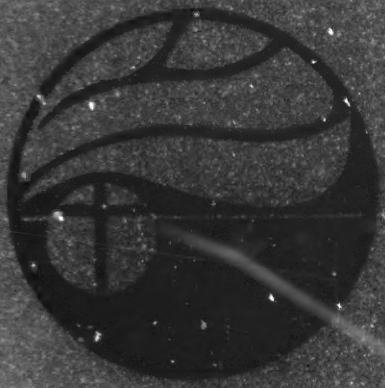
THE NON-CATHOLIC IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL



Department of Religious Education
National Catholic Educational Association

THE NON-CATHOLIC IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Department of Religious Education
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Introduction

Catholic education and Catholic Schools have very lofty goals. The Second Vatican Council said these goals include: "ensuring that the baptized . . . may grow ever more conscious of the gift of faith which they have received that they may learn to adore God the Father in spirit and in truth (cf Jn 4:25), especially through liturgical worship; and that they may be prepared to lead their personal lives according to a new nature, in justice and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:22-24); so that they may reach perfect maturity . . . and make their contribution to the increase of the Mystical Body" *(Gravissimum Educationis, 2)*.

The ultimate goal of our schools is to enable each of the baptized to live to the full their baptismal dignity and vocation. Our schools are intended to be a setting where the whole person can be educated and formed in a Christ-centered world view that will equip them to take an active part in the transformation of society and the realization of a more peaceful and just world.

In recent years in the United States the number of non-Catholic teachers and especially students in our schools has grown. Non-Catholic students have increased from 2.7% in 1970 to 10.6% in 1983. In the region of the Southeast they make up 16.5% of the student population.

What implications does this data have for the goals and practice of Catholic education in our schools? The phenomenon has happened without a lot of conscious thought being given to its ramifications. Parents have intuitively seen our schools as a place where pre-eminence is given to moral values, discipline and quality education and we have accepted and welcomed their children, often irrespective of religious affiliation.

Perhaps now is an appropriate time for more reflection on this phenomenon and even for developing some guidelines or principles that might be applicable for the role of non-Catholic parents, teachers and students in our schools. To spark a dialogue towards this end, we have assembled in this publication two articles which look at the topic from somewhat contrasting points of view. We are very grateful to Father James Hawker and to Sr. Thea Bowman for contributing to this effort and we prayerfully hope it may be of practical benefit to all involved in the great ministry of Catholic education.

Rev. Francis D. Kelly
Executive Director
Department of Religious Education
National Catholic Educational Association

The Schools as an Evangelizing Community: Guidelines Regarding Teachers, Pupils & Parents

Rev. James Hawker

As I recall the many wonderful experiences of my youth I remember with gratitude my years at Cathedral High School in Boston. Cathedral High was much more than a building of brick and mortar. It was a graced environment in which the person of Jesus Christ was central and the wonders of His Gospel were shared. It was a magnificant setting in which the youthful participants were enabled to understand and appreciate the relationship between culture and faith; between faith and life. Those of us who attended the school, located in the inner-city, were guided to appreciate our dignity and uniqueness and to cultivate our lives and talents.

At the time, in the nineteen fifties, thirty Sisters of St. Joseph comprised the faculty at Cathedral High. There were no lay teachers. All of the students, coming from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, had been baptized in the Catholic Christian tradition. During the intervening years, however, the composition of the faculty and student body has been transformed significantly at Cathedral. Presently most of the faculty are lay people. More than fifty percent of the students represent religious affiliations other than the Catholic Christian tradition.

Although the situation at Cathedral High has evolved over the years the school has continued to exercise a truly unique and valuable service as an educational agency of the Church. This is due in large part to the willingness of the personnel therein to consider seriously the mission and responsibility of the Catholic school in relation to those persons within the school who are identified with other religious traditions and to formulate a position on the matter.

The experience of Cathedral High School in Boston is not unfamiliar to many administrators on the elementary or high school level. Others have been exposed to a less dramatic transition. Undoubtedly, still others have dealt with the reality of the non-Catholic in the Catholic school for many years. There is no doubt, however, that many administrators, whether on the diocesan or local level, have reason to examine thoughtfully the issue under review in this paper

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and to establish a policy or position in relation to the non-Catholic in the Catholic school.

Before we examine the matter of the non-Catholic in the Catholic school it is necessary to consider briefly three related areas. First, the mission of Jesus Christ inasmuch as the Catholic school is founded upon Jesus. Secondly, the mission of the Church since the Catholic school is an agency of the Church. Third, the mission of the Catholic school as an educational agency of Christ and the Church.

Jesus: Sent By The Father

First, the mission of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is the primordial Sacrament of the Father. He, by life and lifestyle, word and deed, manifests the Father's faithful presence and enduring love. Jesus always respects His hearer's freedom. Yet, Jesus urges the person to expand his consciousness, to broaden her horizons. He invites the person to be converted, to turn to the Father, to accept Him and His message.

Jesus is the supreme Evangelizer. He proclaims the Good News of Salvation.[1]

Jesus is the supreme Catechist. He explains the meaning and ramifications of that Good News.

The mission of Jesus is pastoral. He reaches out to the total person whom He meets. He speaks to the heart, mind and soul of the beneficiary of His caring presence.

The mission of Jesus is educational. He proclaims a Gospel of peace and justice, hope and joy. He shares His interpretation regarding the source, the meaning and the end of life. He discusses the importance of accepting and implementing His vision, His values, His convictions, His attitudes. He stresses the necessity of cultivating a spirit of unity and service if one is to be His friend and disciple. He teaches the wonder and ramifications of the ineffable gifts of Faith, Hope and Love.

Jesus reveals, affirms, guides and heals. He reveals the love and faithfulness of God and in the words Pope John Paul II likes to use "he reveals man to himself"—shows him his dignity and eternal destiny and the equality of all human persons under God. Jesus affirms the importance of each and calls on each to develop his/her gifts. Jesus guides by teaching us how to live and heals as the Savior.

The Church: Sent in Christ's Name

Pope John Paul II, while in Boston, reminded the youth of America that the mission of the Church is pastoral and educational. The responsibility of the Church within every age is to offer a truly Christian interpretation of life and reality; to share a Christ-like appreciation of the meaning and value of the person; to model and exemplify the manner in which persons should live and relate. The Church fulfills this ineffable task by accepting, cultivating and sharing the Word and Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The Church as the Sacrament of the Father's love, and enlivened by His Spirit, is missioned by the risen Lord to evangelize—announce the Good News;[2] to catechize—unfold the message in its beauty and splendor.[3]

The Church, as the extension of the risen Lord, is sent to witness and prophecy, to be a community committed to peace and justice, to be a people of hope and joy.[4]

The Church as the Body of Christ is commissioned by the risen Lord to go and teach: to proclaim His vision, to share His values, to celebrate the Mystery, to serve the Kingdom.

All the while the Church, like her founder and head, must fulfill a four-fold pastoral mission. She, too, must reveal, affirm, guide and heal.

The Catholic School: Sent by Christ and The Church

As we realize, an accurate understanding of the nature and mission of the Catholic school cannot be achieved unless we consider the school's relationship to the risen Christ and the teaching Church.

During the past two decades we who exercise a leadership role in the ministry of Catholic education have been enlightened and guided, comforted and challenged by timely Church documents. They have discussed significant issues that relate to the nature and mission of the contemporary Catholic school. The *Declaration on Christian Education* (1965), *The General Catechetical Directory* (1971), *To Teach As Jesus Did* (1973), *Teach Them* (1976), *The Catholic School* (1977) and *The National Catechetical Directory* (1978), *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982) have assisted us to fulfill our responsibility as educational leaders. The nature and mission of the Catholic school have been described clearly in these documents. They have viewed the Catholic school from a healthy contextual perspective and discussed its unique contribution in implementing the pastoral/educational mission of the Church.

Being sensitive to the insights shared in these documents how might we describe today's Catholic school? I offer the following statements, each of which could be expanded significantly, as a partial response to that timely question.

- The Catholic school is identified with the Church as a structured community.
- The Catholic school participates uniquely in the pastoral/educational mission of the Church.
- The Catholic school is a developing community of Faith, founded upon Jesus Christ—His person and message, His vision and values.
- The Catholic school is an evangelizing community within which the spirit of the Gospel is shared and experienced, taught and caught.
- The Catholic school is a catechizing community within which the basic teachings of Christ and His Church are shared.

- The Catholic school is a grace-filled setting within which there is a synthesis of culture and faith and a synthesis of faith and life.
- The Catholic school is an environmental setting within which spiritual formation and growth are fostered by means of liturgical and other prayer experiences.
- The Catholic school is staffed by committed Catholics, whether lay, religious or priests.
- The Catholic school is staffed, in some instances, by non-Catholics who accept and strive to fulfill the goals of Catholic education and who participate in the prayer life of the community to the extent that they are able.

Each Catholic school is expected to be an exciting environment within which Faith matures and develops as the Good News of Jesus Christ is proclaimed, lived and shared.[5]

The success of the Catholic school is dependent, in no small part, upon the willingness of the adult participants to open their hearts to the gift of Faith and to cultivate that gift day by day. At the same time, they must share the meaning and ramifications of that Faith with one another and with the students in their care.

Those who minister within the Catholic schools should accept and implement the spirit of *To Teach As Jesus Did*.[6] Each is called to impart the message, form community and inspire service. Some will fulfill that responsibility, at least in part, in religion class. Others will do so by the manner in which they share truly Christian attitudes and values within the context of their classroom teaching and personal relationships.[7]

All those who minister within the Catholic school by word and example assist those in their care to open their minds to grasp God's truth, their hearts to accept God's love, their hands to serve God's poor. They guide the young to appreciate their lives, cultivate their talents and share their gifts as unique persons who have been and are being loved and liberated by the Lord of life. The student can be enlightened and encouraged by the quality of unconditional care manifested in the words and deeds, life and lifestyle of the truly committed educator in the Catholic school.[8]

The Religion Curriculum in The Catholic School

The religion curriculum that is implemented within the Catholic school shares the basic teachings of Jesus Christ in a systematic manner. The presentation of those teachings may manifest an evangelistic spirit from various points of view. First, if the student body includes non-believers and religion curriculum is concerned with helping them to respond to the signs of Faith or God's saving action on their behalf.

In other words, evangelization, in the strict sense, has as its purpose, the arousing of the beginnings of Fatih. Secondly, the religion curriculum is evangelistic to the extent that it introduces to believers a particular sign for the

first time or presents it in such a way that the believer grasps its significance for the first time. Thirdly, the religion curriculum is evangelical inasmuch as it shares the teachings of Christ to believers and non-believers with enthusiasm and joy.

The evangelical dimension of the catechetical enterprise is essential as the students within the Catholic school participate in religion class.[9] The Good News speaks to them clearly about their roots and destiny, their meaning and dignity, their lives and relationships. It offers a vision of life and reality, an interpretation of creation and history. Every student within the school should be afforded an opportunity of coming to know the person of Christ, the wonder of His teachings and the significance of His message.

The Formation of Community in The Catholic School

The Good News is shared so that it might take root in the lives of the hearers and be reflected in their attitudes, actions and relationships. If it is to be true to its mission the Catholic school should cultivate and manifest the evangelical spirit that is proclaimed in the Gospel. Formation of community is an essential goal of Catholic education.[10] The Catholic school, as a microcosm of the Church, is called to be a truly Christian community—a community of care and concern, of respect and reconciliation, of justice and peace.[11]

Students who attend the Catholic school should be assisted to understand the nature and to experience the meaning of Christian community.[12] Each student should be respected as a unique and gifted creation of God. Students should be challenged to view and treat one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord. They should be helped to appreciate that the development of Christian community is a common responsibility shared by all who participate in the Catholic school.

Frequent opportunities should be presented for the students to gather for prayer, to celebrate the Eucharist and to participate in programs of retreat and reflection. The potential significance of these prayerful moments should never be underestimated. It is precisely within these settings that the Spirit of the Lord may enlighten the minds, transform the hearts and enliven the spirits of those in attendance. Involvement in these and similar experiences is essential if the Catholic school is to be an environment within which the Good News is announced, accepted and lived, if it is to become a truly Christian community.[13]

The Catholic School's Call to Serve

Jesus, the Evangelizer, revealed the love of the Father and announced the arrival of the Kingdom by word and deed. He invited those who would be His disciples and witnesses to serve in His name empowered by His Spirit.[14] The Catholic school, as an evangelical setting within which the Good News is shared and experienced, must challenge its participants to accept the responsibility of

service. They should be reminded to recognize and respond to one another's needs.[15] They must be challenged to look beyond the confines of the school and to discover manifestations of injustice and deprivation within the broader community. Then, as persons who are called to service, they must respond to these situations to the extent that they are able.[16]

If the Catholic school is to fulfill its mission, programs of service should be viewed as integral to its responsibility. If the students in the Catholic school are to incorporate its spirit and teachings they must participate actively in these programs. As the programs of service are made available for the participation of the students the adult leadership within the school must ensure that the spirit of justice that they proclaim is implemented in the daily life of the school.[17]

The Non-Catholic in The Catholic School

Before the rather complex question of accepting and incorporating the non-Catholic into the Catholic school can be discussed it is imperative that the nature, mission and responsibility of the school be considered. The accomplishment of that task requires that the Catholic school be viewed in its relation to the Church that has been sent by the risen Lord to teach all nations. It follows, then, that the observations shared thus far are an essential introduction as we examine the matter of the non-Catholic in the Catholic school.

The Use of The Term "Non-Catholic"

Throughout the paper I shall refer to the "non-Catholic" teacher and student. I would prefer to employ a more positive sounding word or phrase to describe these persons. I, like you, recognize that they and their religious convictions are to be respected. Hence, my use of the term "non-Catholic" does not reflect any lack of respect on my part.

When I employ the term non-Catholic in this presentation I am referring to persons who are not members of the Catholic community regardless of their religious affiliation or lack thereof. I realize that there is a significant difference between non-Catholic Christians and Jews, Moslems, Buddhists and non-believers. I understand as well the unique bond that exists between Catholics and non-Catholic Christians due to their common acceptance of one Lord and one Baptism. However, the expectations to be outlined must be understood and accepted by each applicant regardless of his or her religious background if the Catholic school is to fulfill its mission and purpose.

In considering the topic: The Non-Catholic in the Catholic School I shall divide my comments into three parts:

I. The Non-Catholic Teacher in the Catholic School.
II. The Non-Catholic Pupil in the Catholic School.
III. The Non-Catholic Parent and the Catholic School.

THE NON-CATHOLIC TEACHER IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

One important question should be raised at the outset. Under what conditions is a non-Catholic applicant hired in preference to a Catholic? It would seem, all things being equal, that a school would place a priority on hiring the Catholic applicant when one considers the nature and purpose of Catholic education.

However, in deciding upon a course of action in particular cases, the person's academic and professional backgrounds as well as his or her willingness to accept and implement the philosophy and goals of the school would be important considerations. If the school is to fulfill its mission, those on the faculty must be as prepared as possible to assist the youth to achieve an integration of culture and faith and a synthesis of faith and life.

This having been said, if a non-Catholic applies to teach in a Catholic school, the interview with the principal is extremely important. During the interview the convictions of the applicant must be respected. At the same time, the principal should discuss frankly the expectations of the school as far as the applicant is concerned. If the person is not able to fulfill these expectations then he or she should not be hired. It would be unfair to the applicant and to the school community if the person were hired.

At the conclusion of the interview the candidate must accept the following expectations if he/she is to be considered a viable candidate.

- The applicant should understand and accept the role of the school as a unique pastoral, educational agency of the Church.
- The applicant should understand and be willing to implement the philosophy and goals of the school.
- The applicant should be willing to attend those liturgies and prayer experiences that are celebrated for faculty growth.
- The applicant should be willing to participate in in-service sessions for the faculty intended for spiritual and professional growth.
- The applicant should be willing to attend those liturgies and prayer experiences that are celebrated for the growth of the total school community.
- The applicant should be willing to mirror the Gospel values in relating to the adults and students identified with the school.
- The applicant should understand the importance of integrating the curriculum with the Gospel values espoused by the Church and be willing to do so in his/her subject area.
- The applicant should understand that he/she will not be expected to teach religion especially in those areas that require catechetical witness.

There may be other areas that the principal wishes to raise during the interview. However, the eight that I have listed are crucial. It is obvious that the

interview cannot be rushed. Ample time must be allotted for the applicant to ask questions and/or react to the points discussed by the principal.

We are aware that there are many outstanding non-Catholics teaching in Catholic schools throughout the United States. So many of these wonderful persons reflect a deep belief in God and an exemplary identification with their religious tradition. They manifest a Christ-like respect for life and a truly selfless approach to the teaching vocation. Their presence in these schools is enriching and inspiring. Their commitment to fulfilling the philosophy and goals of Catholic education is truly laudatory. Those in leadership must do everything possible to insure that today's non-Catholic applicants mirror comparable qualities if they are to be hired to teach in Catholic schools.

If a non-Catholic applicant is hired, the principal should assist the person in every way possible. It may be helpful to meet with the person again before the school year begins—particularly if he/she has not taught in a Catholic school previously. The principal should meet with him/her occassionally, especially during the first few months, for support and encouragement, to offer helpful suggestions and answer any questions. At some time during these meetings the principal and teacher might re-examine the issues that were raised in the initial interview and discuss how to approach any areas of difficulty in implementing them.

THE NON-CATHOLIC PUPIL IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

In this age of ecumenism the contemporary Church can perform a magnificent service in welcoming non-Catholics into its schools. In doing so, it enables the Catholics to learn about the religious beliefs, attitudes and practices of the non-Catholics. It also assists the non-Catholics to understand the religious beliefs, attitudes and practices of the Catholic community. At the same time, the non-Catholic students, like the Catholics, are helped to appreciate their lives and gifts and to cultivate their talents and skills.

An important question follows. When does a school choose a non-Catholic applicant in preference to a Catholic? The answer is determined locally. It would seem, all things being equal, that a school would place a preference on accepting the Catholic applicant when one considers the nature and purpose of Catholic education.

However, in deciding a course of action in particular cases, there are parochial, academic, financial, attitudinal and sociological considerations.

Parochial—all things being equal, it would seem that a parish school would place a priority on accepting a Catholic applicant from the parish. Whether or not another member of the applicant's family attends the school as well as whether or not the family supports the parish may be important considerations in selecting Catholic applicants from the parish.

There may be instances in which non-Catholic children residing within the parish boundaries apply for admission to the parish school. All things being equal, I recommend considering seriously the acceptance of these children in preference to Catholics from other parishes. The rationale for this view is that the parish has a responsibility towards all persons living within its boundaries. If the non-Catholic applicants are black or other minorities there are two additional reasons for accepting them. First, the acceptance of these children would be a visible sign of the parish's concrete commitment to social justice. Second, the incorporation of these minority children would not only benefit them but their presence would enrich the other children in the school.

Academic — all things being equal it would seem that a Catholic applicant would be selected before a non-Catholic. However, the Catholic must be able to fulfill the academic standards of the school. If the Catholic could not do so and a non-Catholic could, then the non-Catholic might be selected provided he/she manifests a responsible attitude in relation to the purpose and goals of the school.

Financial — It would be unfortunate if a Catholic applicant were rejected because of his/her inability to cover the tuition. However, it may be that a non-Catholic applicant, who is willing and able to fulfill the academic, attitudinal and financial standards will be selected over a Catholic.

Attitudinal — Those who attend the Catholic school must be willing to accept its purpose and goals. If Catholic applicants are not willing to do so they should not be accepted. On the other hand, if non-Catholic applicants are willing to accept the purpose and goals, as well as the other criteria for admission, they should be accepted.

Sociological — particularly in urban and inner-city settings, the Catholic school can perform a valuable service in opening its doors to non-Catholic blacks and other minorities. Due to the fact that many non-Catholic blacks or other minorities reside within the area the school's students population may become largely non-Catholic. Nonetheless, the Catholicity of the school must be maintained and nurtured. Such being the case, the principal and the majority of the faculty should be committed Catholics.

When reflecting upon the question of the non-Catholic student in the Catholic school one should remember that the Catholic school is called to be a community of Faith within which an evangelizing and catechizing ministry is being fulfilled. Whether we are considering the presence of Catholic or non-Catholic students within the community, the school must be committed to being a community, the school must be committed to being a community of Faith that evangelizes and catechizes. The school is founded on Jesus Christ. It is open to and anxious to proclaim His Good News. At the same time it is a setting within which the meaning and ramifications of the Gospel message are unfolded, formally and informally, in a structured and unstructured manner.

This having been said, we must acknowledge two other realities when considering the matter under discussion. First, it is essential that the backgrounds and experiences, the personal integrity and religious beliefs of all who participate in the school community be respected. Secondly, it is imperative that the freedom of conscience of those who are present be respected. While the Catholic school is a community of Faith as well as an evangelizing and catechetical community it should never be concerned with proselytizing. The school should be viewed as a graced environment within which its participants, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, are invited but never coerced to accept the Good News, to incorporate its spirit and to manifest its values in daily living.

The Non-Catholic Pupil: Criteria for Admission

Non-Catholic students who apply to attend a Catholic school, especially a junior high or high school, should be interviewed together with their parents. After the conversation has been completed the acceptance of the applicant will depend upon a number of factors. However, as far as the attitude of the applicant is concerned, the following six points are extremely important.

- The non-Catholic applicant should understand, accept and be willing to support actively the philosophy and goals of the school.
- The non-Catholic applicant should be willing to relate responsibly to the members of the school community, whether adults or students.
- The non-Catholic applicant should be willing to cultivate his or her person, talents and abilities to the extent that he or she is able.
- The non-Catholic applicant should be willing to attend religion class.
- The non-Catholic applicant should realize that he or she will be invited to attend liturgy at the school and understand the reasons for that invitation.
- The non-Catholic applicant should be willing to participate in programs of service sponsored by the school.

The Non-Catholic Pupil and Religion Class

The non-Catholic student in the Catholic school should be required to attend religion class. These classes are an integral part of the life of the school. During religion class those in attendance are assisted to understand the basic teachings of Christ and the Church. The participants may or may not accept the message in Faith. Nonetheless, if, due to the presentation offered in class, the non-Catholic students are helped to understand correctly the Catholic teachings and to grasp their relationship to life then the school has fulfilled a truly ecumenical responsibility. Naturally, the religion teacher should be sensitive to the ability of the student to understand and be respectful of his/her personal religious convictions.

Three added questions might be raised in relation to this concern. First, Should separate religion classes be established for non-Catholic students? My preference is that they attend religion class with the Catholic students. The give

and take, views, opinions and questions of all the participants, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, can be extremely beneficial. Within the context of this type of sharing and discussion a truly ecumenical appreciation and respect can be fostered for all the participants.

Second, if non-Catholics do attend religion class with the Catholics, what should be done for them at the time of Sacramental preparation? Separate religion classes for the non-Catholic students could be formulated during that period immediately preceding the reception of sacraments by the Catholic students. However, previous to that time my view would be that the non-Catholics remain in class with the Catholic students. After all, if the sacraments are presented properly they should be viewed as reflecting the caring values of Jesus in relation to the life of the recipient. During these presentations the non-Catholic is assisted to gain insight into the relationship between Sacraments and life.

Third, should the religion classes which the non-Catholics attend be viewed as catechetics or religious studies? Some believe that the classes for non-Catholics must be viewed as religious studies. These persons are convinced that religious instruction for non-Catholics cannot be understood as catechetics.

Their conviction is based upon the traditional distinction between evangelization and catechesis. The purpose of evangelization is described as arousing the beginnings of Faith. On the other hand, the purpose of catechesis is to make a person's Faith become living, conscious and active through the light of instruction. Those who question the involvement of non-Catholics in religion class stress that unless they have been evangelized and possess the gift of Catholic Faith they are not in a position to be catechized.

Although I understand the traditional distinction between evangelization and catechesis my position is that the religion class in which the non-Catholic participates can be viewed as a catechetical experience. My conviction seems to be supported by Pope John Paul II's recent Apostolic Exhortation entitled *On Catechesis in Our Time*.

Pope John Paul II in *On Catechesis in Our Time,* does discuss the relationship between catechesis and the initial proclamation of the Gospel. He states that there is no separation or opposition between catechesis and evangelization. At the same time the Holy Father points out that they cannot simply be identified with each other even though they have close links whereby they integrate and complement one another.

Nonetheless, Pope John Paul does note that there are at least four situations within which the initial evangelization has often not taken place before one participates in a catechetical situation.[18] One example that he mentions is that of children who have not been baptized and whose parents agree at a later date to religious instruction. The Holy Father responds to these situations by saying, "This means that 'catechesis' must often concern itself not only with nourishing and teaching the faith, but also with arousing it unceasingly with the help of grace, with opening the heart, with converging, and with preparing total adherence to Jesus Christ on the part of those who are still on the threshold of

faith. This concern will in part decide the tone, the language and the method of catechesis."[19]

The insights and observations shared by Pope John Paul II in *On Catechesis in Our Time* are significant when the participation of the non-Catholic in religion class is considered. Whenever non-Catholic students, especially non-Christians, attend religion class in the Catholic school, the catechesis should be viewed as evangelistic. The catechist attempts to awaken in these students the presence of God and His call to love; to help them come to an appreciation and acceptance of God in their hearts; to invite them to say yes to Christ and His Gospel.

The catechists should recall the timely message addressed to the youth of America by Pope John Paul II when he celebrated the Liturgy on the Boston Common. The Holy Father offered an option to the young people and invited them to respond when he stated: "To each one of you I say therefore: heed the call of Christ when you hear Him saying to you: 'Follow me!' Walk in my path! Stand by my side! Remain in my love! There is a choice to be made: a choice for Christ and His way of life and His commandment of love . . . The message of love that Christ brought is always important, always relevant . . . Today I propose to you the option of love. If you really acept that love from Christ it will lead you to God . . . In whatever you do, remember that Christ is calling you, in one way or another, to the service of love: love of God and neighbor."[20]

The catechist is not concerned with proselytization, which implies a coercion to become a Catholic. The task of the evangelizing catechist is to offer an option to the students. Like the Pope, he or she shares the person and message of Christ in the hope that the hearer might respond. Although that option is invaluable from the catechists' perspective, it is simply one option among a number available to the students. Some students may choose not to make or re-affirm a religious commitment. Others may decide to accept Christ and His message as interpreted by the Catholic tradition. Another group may commit themselves to a Protestant understanding of Christ and His teachings. Whatever the response or lack thereof, the catechist must always respect the right of the student to exercise freedom of conscience.

The Non-Catholic and The Formation of Community

The non-Catholic students in the school should be encouraged to participate in the celebration of the Liturgy to the extent that they are able. Although these young people cannot receive the Eucharist, they can benefit significantly from the power-filled message shared in the Liturgy of the Word. It can assist them to reflect upon the meaning and relevance of the vision and values that are unfolded in the Gospel. It can remind them of the importance of attitudes such as peace and justice, care and compassion, love and hope. It may be catalytic in enabling them to cultivate their Faith, their personal relationship to the transcendent, their sense of responsibility toward others.

Then too, the non-Catholics can be evangelized effectively by the body-talk and values manifested within the ritual which is a truly religious experience.

It follows that when liturgies are celebrated there should be a keen sensitivity manifested to the lives, needs and experiences of the students. The choice of readings, hymns, etc., is extremely important. The setting and mood are vital in creating an atmosphere in which the students are assisted to open their minds and hearts to the presence of the divine.

The non-Catholic students should attend the para-liturgical and other prayer services that are intended to enhance and enrich the life of the community within the school. Since these students are an integral part of the community their presence and involvement during these special moments is important and valuable. Once again, these experiences present the students with an opportunity to reflect upon their lives, their meaning and their responsibilities.

The Non-Catholic Pupil and The Call to Serve

Non-Catholic students should participate in programs of service sponsored by the Catholic school. Such experiences are catalytic in enabling students, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, to cultivate a spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice while they respond to the needs of others. Then too, any program of service sponsored by a Catholic school should include a prayer/reflection component. As the students reflect and pray together these graced moments assist Catholics and non-Catholics alike to understand and appreciate that the call to action on behalf of others is an integral part of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

THE NON-CATHOLIC PARENT AND THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

It is imperative that the principal interview non-Catholic parents who wish their child to be enrolled in the Catholic school. During the interview the principal is able to explain significant issues that relate to the nature and purpose of the Catholic school. The principal's observations should be shared frankly but with respect for the convictions of the non-Catholic parents. Within the interview process there should be ample opportunity for the parents to express their views and raise clarifying questions. After the principal and parents have discussed the issues thoroughly both parties will be better able to determine whether or not the child should be enrolled.

During the interview the parents should be assisted to understand that the Catholic school participates in the pastoral/educational and evangelizing/catechizing mission of the Church. It is intended to be a setting within which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed, explained and experienced. While it is true that challenging academic standards, sound study habits and a balanced code of discipline are cultivated in the Catholic school, its ultimate purpose cannot be contained nor adequately explained by these important dimensions of its responsibility.

During the interview the non-Catholic parents should be helped to appreciate that if the Catholic school is to fulfill its mission responsibility, it must not only cultivate and reflect a truly Christian atmosphere but must provide an opportunity for every student to hear and understand the teachings of Christ as unfolded in Scripture and Tradition.

It is essential that the principal explain the nature and goals of the religion curriculum. The non-Catholic parents may be opposed to their child's attending religion classes. They may fear that the youngster will be expected to accept uncritically the teachings that are shared. They may presume that the non-Catholic student will be coerced into agreement with the message that is presented. Since the non-Catholic students will be expected to participate in religion class it is necessary that their parents, whether initially opposed to this position or not, be assisted to understand the nature and goals of the religion curriculum. They should be helped to understand that the religion curriculum within the Catholic school is approached on three levels.

Message Level — The basic teachings of Jesus Christ are presented as understood and interpreted by the Catholic tradition.

Value Level — The catechist presents the basic teachings as significant and valuable to him or her and invites the students to recognize and appreciate their significance and value.

Relational Level — The ultimate objective of the catechetical enterprise is to assist the student to respond in faith. The achievement of this end is dependent upon the grace of God and the openness of the student.

It is important to describe each of the levels and to acknowledge that some students may never go beyond the message level. The non-Catholic parents should be assured that no student will ever be forced or coerced to move beyond that level. On the contrary, they should be reminded that if the Catholic school is to be faithful to its responsibility the person and views of each student must be respected and his or her freedom of conscience protected.[21] At the same time, however, participation in the religion class respects the dignity of the student as a child of God by enabling him or her to hear and come to understand the basic teachings of Jesus Christ.[22]

Two possibilities should be discussed with non-Catholic parents who request that their children be accepted into a primary grade. First, non-Catholic students in grade two may find it difficult to understand why they cannot receive First Communion with the Catholic children. They may be extremely unhappy that they cannot do so. Second, although non-Catholic students in a Catholic school are offered the option of accepting Christ and His message, it is difficult for a student on the primary level to recognize and deal with an option. In learning about Christ and the Church they, to the extent that they are able, may wish to believe in Christ and be members of His Church. Nonetheless, although these possibilities do exist, the non-Catholic parents should understand that these students will be required to participate in religion class. If it

seems necessary, however, the parents should be assured that these young students, who tend to be more vulnerable than those who are older, will not be manipulated in any way.

Non-Catholic parents should be informed that all non-Catholic students within the school are encouraged to participate in the liturgical and para-liturgical services that are celebrated for the school community. The parents should be helped to understand the nature and purpose of these celebrations. Not only do they offer praise to the living God but, particularly as the Liturgy of the Word is proclaimed, hearers are reminded of God's goodness on their behalf and invited to respond. Then too, these celebrations are graced moments, within which the community within the school is strengthened and supported.

The principal should stress to the non-Catholic parents that all students who attend Catholic school are inspired to serve others. The parents should be informed that this goal is accomplished in part by the students being exposed to an adult leadership that is truly Christian, by their being taught the meaning and demands of the Social Gospel and by their being familiarized with the manifestations of insensitivity, inhumanity or indifference that exist in the school, the neighborhood, the nation and the world.

During the interview, the principal should assure the non-Catholic parents that if their child is accepted the youngster will be welcomed as a valuable participant within the school community and that his or her conscience will always be respected. The principal should acknowledge that the non-Catholic students do bring with them a rich heritage and contribute significantly to the environment within the school.

Before the interview concludes another matter should be discussed by the principal and the parents. Will the non-Catholic pupil be expected to pay a higher tuition than the Catholic pupil? If I were dealing with the question, I would distinguish between parish schools and diocesan or private schools. When considering parish schools, it would appear that those who do not support the parish, whether they be Catholic or non-Catholic, should be expected to pay a higher tuition. In my view, then, the determining factor in this instance, is not the religious affiliation or the pupil. Rather it is whether or not the pupil's family is supporting the parish.

As far as diocesan or private schools are concerned, my opinion is that the rate of tuition should be the same for all of the pupils. I would not expect higher tuitions from non-Catholic student simply because they are non-Catholic.

The interview process presents to all concerned an opportunity to examine thoughtfully the nature, mission and responsibilities of the Catholic school. At the same time it highlights the attitudes that should be accepted by the non-Catholic parents and their child if the youngster is to be incorporated into the community within the school. After the conversation has been completed the principal and parents will be better able to determine whether or not the child should attend the school.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

The Schools in Which Most of The Students Are Non-Catholic

In most Catholic schools in which there are non-Catholic students they would be in the minority. However, particularly in urban and inner city areas, the non-Catholic students may outnumber significantly the Catholics. Nonetheless, the Catholicity of the school must be preserved. The goals of Catholic education, as outlined in *To Teach As Jesus Did,* must be implemented.

In these schools the non-Catholic students should be required to participate in religion class. The basic teachings of Christ and the Church, as well as the value and significance of these teachings, should be presented. The students should be informed that participation in the religion class assists them to understand these teachings correctly.

The teacher should be sensitive to the ability of the students to comprehend the content as well as to their social and religious backgrounds, experience and needs. The students should be encouraged to share the views of their tradition in relation to the matter under consideration. As is always the case, the consciences of the students must be respected.

If the majority of the students are non-Catholic it is advisable to conduct para-liturgical services rather than celebrate liturgies. However, on special occasions the liturgy might be celebrated. Then too, liturgies could be celebrated especially during Advent and Lent before or after school and the invitation extended to faculty and students to attend.

The Interview Process for Catholic Teacher/Student Applicants

Although I have been considering the non-Catholic teacher/student applicants in this presentation, you and I realize that certain Catholic teacher/student applicants may not be interested in accepting the philosophy, implementing the goals or incorporating the spirit of the Catholic school. Such being the case, many of the questions raised when dealing with non-Catholic applicants should be discussed with Catholic candidates.

It is important to raise these questions with non-Catholics because they, coming from other religious traditions, have a right to know the expectations of the Catholic school as far as they are concerned before they commit themselves to become active participants within the school. On the other hand, appropriate questions should be discussed with Catholic teacher/student candidates to ensure that they are applying with the proper attitudes and will strive to be responsible members of the school community.

CONCLUSION

Today's Catholic school is called to fulfill an invaluable function within contemporary society. Those who are privileged to exercise a leadership role within the school must create and cultivate an environment within which the goals of Catholic education can be achieved.

If the Catholic school is to respond positively to its calling, Jesus Christ must be recognized as the foundation upon which the school rests. The Catholic school must be viewed as a graced environment within which those persons who participate in its life are invited to perceive and accept Jesus Christ as Lord. If the Catholic school is to fulfill its evangelical mission its participants must be encouraged to incorporate and cultivate the vision and values of Jesus Christ and share his forgiveness, peace and justice.

The nature, purpose and goals of the school need not, indeed cannot, be sacrificed or diluted by incorporating non-Catholics into the community. The school can and must be a community of Faith in which an evangelizing and catechizing ministry is being fulfilled.

The Catholic school can and must be a truly pastoral setting in which all of the participants—adults and students, Catholics and non-Catholics are comforted and challenged, enriched and encouraged, refreshed and renewed, strengthened and supported.

References

[1]Going from town to town, preaching to the poorest—and frequently the most receptive—the joyful news of the fulfillment of the promises and of the Covenant offered by God is the mission for which Jesus declares He is sent by the Father. And all the aspects of His mystery—the Incarnation itself, His miracles, His teaching, the gathering together of the disciples, the sending out of the Twelve, the cross and the resurrection, the permanence of His presence in the midst of His own were components of His evangelizing activity. *On Evangelization in the Modern World,* Pope Paul VI, Para.6

[2]Those who have received the Good News and who have been gathered by it into the community of salvation can and must communicate and spread it. The Church knows this. She has a vivid awareness of the fact that the Savior's words, "I must proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God," apply in all truth to herself. She willingly adds with St. Paul: "Not that I boast of preaching the Gospel since it is a duty that has been laid on me; I should be punished if I did not preach it. *On Evangelization in the Modern World,* Pope Paul VI, paras. 13, 14

[3]"The Church is an instrument of salvation and a sign of Christ in the world today. His mission is the Church's mission; His message is the Church's message. Jesus was sent to reveal the deepest truth about God and at the same time reveal man to himself and make his supreme calling clear." (*The Church Today,* para. 22) He commissioned His Church to do the same; to teach men and women about God and themselves, to foster their love of God and one another." (*To Teach As Jesus Did,* para. 12)

[4]But evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the increasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social. This is why evangelization involves a specific message, adapted to different situations constantly being realized, about the rights and duties of every human being; about family life without which personal growth and development is hardly possible, about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development—a message especially energetic today about liberation. *On Evangelization in the Modern World, Pope Paul VI,* para. 29

[5]To carry out her saving mission, the Church uses, above all, the means which Jesus Christ has given her. She also uses other means which at different times and in different cultures have proved

effective in achieving and promoting the development of the human person . . . She establishes her own schools because she considers them as a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole man, since the school is a center in which a specific concept of the world, of man, and of history is developed and conveyed. *The Catholic School, para. 8*

[6]The educational mission of the Church is an integrated ministry embracing three interlocking dimensions: the message revealed by God which the Church proclaims, fellowship in the life of the Holy Spirit, service to the Christian community and the entire human community. While these three essential elements can be separated for the sake of analysis, they are joined in the one educational ministry. Each educational program or institution under Church sponsorship is obliged to contribute in its own way to the realization of the three-fold purpose within the total educational ministry. *To Teach As Jesus Did,* para. 14.

[7]By their witness and their behavior teachers are of the first importance to impart a distinctive character to Catholic schools. It is, therefore, indispensable to ensure their continuing formation, through some form of pastoral provision.This must aim to animate them as witnesses of Christ in the classroom and tackle the problems of their particular apostolate, especially regarding a Christian vision of the world and of education, problems also connected with the art of teaching in accordance with the principles of the Gospel. *The Catholic School,* para. 78

The integration of religious truth and values with the rest of life, which is possible in these schools, distinguishes them from others. The integration is expressed above all in the lives of teachers in Catholic schools whose daily witness to the meaning of mature faith and Christian living has a profound impact upon the education and formation of their pupils. On behalf of the entire Church we affirm our debt to these dedicated ministers of education, sisters, brothers, priests and lay people, who teach by what they are. *Teach Them,* paras. 8, 9

[8]The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, in imitation of Christ, the only Teacher, they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behavior. This is what makes the difference betweeen a school whose education is permeated by the Christ spirit and one in which religion is only regarded as an academic subject like any other. *The Catholic School,* para. 43

[9]A means of evangelization that must not be neglected is that of catechetical instruction. The intelligence, especially that of children and young people, needs to learn through systematic religious instruction the fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and which the Church has sought to express in an ever rich fashion during the course of her long history. No one will deny that this instruction must be given to form patterns of Christian living and not to remain only notional. *On Evangelization in the Modern World,* Pope Paul VI, para. 44

[10]Community is at the heart of Christian education not simply as a concept to be taught but as a reality to be lived. *To Teach As Jesus Did,* para. 23

[11]Building and living community must be prime, explicit goals of the contemporary Catholic school. Community is an especially critical need today largely because natural communities of the past have been weakened by many influences. *To Teach As Jesus Did,* para. 108

[12]Through education men must be moved to build community in all areas of life; they can do this best if they have learned the meaning of community by experiencing it. *To Teach As Jesus Did,* para. 23

[13]No Catholic school can adequately fulfill its educational role on its own. It must continually be fed and stimulated by its source of life, the saving Word of Christ as it is expressed in Sacred Scripture, in tradition, especially liturgical and sacramental tradition, and in the lives of people, past and present, who bear witness to that Word. *The Catholic School,* para. 54

[14]You address me as Teacher and Lord and fittingly enough, for that is what I am. But if I washed your feet—I who am Teacher and Lord—then you must wash each other's feet. What I just did for you was to give you an example: as I have done, so you must do. Jn. 13:13-15

[15]The experience of Christian Community leads naturally to service. Christ gives His people different gifts not only for themselves but for others. Each must serve the other for the good of all. *To Teach As Jesus Did,* para. 28

[16]Radical and ethnic tensions and other conflicts reflect an absence of local and national community. War and exploitation of poor nations by the rich dramatize the same tragic lack of community on the international level. Today's Catholic school must respond to these challenges by developing in its students a commitment to community and to the social skills and virtues needed to achieve it. Participation, together in the liturgy and in paraliturgical activities can effectively foster community among students and faculty. Since the Gospel spirit is one of peace, brotherhood, love, patience and respect for others, a school rooted in these principles ought to explore ways to deepen its students' concern for and skill in peace-making and the achievement of justice.

Here young people can learn together of human needs, whether in the parish, the neighborhood, the local civic community, or the world, and to begin to respond to the obligation of Christian service through joint action. *To Teach As Jesus Did,* para. 109

[17]Since it is motivated by the Christian ideal, the Catholic school is particularly sensitive to the call from every part of the world for a more just society, and it tries to make its own contribution towards it. It does not stop at the courageous teaching of the demands of justice even in the face of local opposition, but tries to put these demands into practice in its own community in the daily life of the school. *The Catholic School,* para. 58

[18]*On Catechesis for Our Time,* Pope John Paul II, para. 19

[19]Ibid

[20]Homily of Pope John Paul II, The Boston Common, October 1, 1979.

[21]At times there are students in Catholic schools who do not profess the Catholic Faith, or perhaps are without any religious faith at all. Faith does not admit of violence; it is a free response of the human person to God as He reveals Himself. Therefore, while Catholic educators will teach doctrine in conformity with their own religious convictions and in accord with the identity of the school, they must at the same time have the greatest respect for those students who are not Catholics. They should be open at all times to authentic dialogue, convinced that in these circumstances the best testimony that they can give of their own faith is a warm and sincere appreciation for anyone who is honestly seeking God according to his or her own conscience. *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith,* para. 42

[22]To begin with, it is clear that the Church has always looked on catechesis as a sacred duty and an inalienable right. On the one hand, it is certainly a duty springing from a command given by the Lord and resting above all on those who in the new covenant receive the call to the ministry of being pastors. On the other hand, one can likewise speak of a right: from the theological point of view every baptized person, precisely by reason of being baptized, has the right to receive from the Church instruction and education enabling him or her to enter on a truly Christian life; and from the viewpoint of human rights, every human being has the right to seek religious truth and adhere to it freely, that is to say, without coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and any human power, in such a way that in this matter of religion, no one is to be forced to act against his or her conscience or prevented from acting in conformity to it. *On Cathechesis in Our Time,* Pope John Paul II, para. 14

Religious and Cultural Variety: Gift to Catholic Schools

Sr. Thea Bowman

I recall with gratitude the experiences of my youth. At the age of twelve I escaped from a segregated public school system plagued with poverty, overcrowding, under-staffing and discouragement to find academic challenge, support and motivation, tailored instruction and an undreamed richness of educational resource, both human and material, at Holy Child Jesus Catholic School in Canton, Mississippi.

The vast majority of the students were Baptist, Methodist, Holiness. There were at most two dozen Catholics in a student population of 180. Holy Child was a good place to be. We loved our teachers (all white nuns, Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration from Wisconsin) because they had first loved us. They worked with our parents. They worked with our families and friends. They worked with the Churches to "help us help ourselves."

For a handful of Catholics, for devout protestants, for the children of a surprising number of ministers, deacons, elders and evangelizers, and for children who rarely went to any church, the Catholic School was a graced and grace-filled environment.

We all went to Mass each week, sang in the choir, learned, if we wished, to serve Mass (boys only) or to care for vestments and altar (girls only). We all prayed before every class. We all studied catechism. With Father Gilbert and Father Justin, religion class was a time to be anticipated and treasured—stories of Jesus and the saints, songs and prayers, and Catholic doctrine. Our pastors loved us. They entertained us as they taught us.

Some of my friends and schoolmates developed insights and skills (reading, thought, judgment, song) which enabled them to become young leaders in the Protestant churches of Canton.

I was drawn to examine and accept the Catholic faith because of the day-to-day lived witness of Catholic Christians who first loved me, then shared with me their story, their values, their beliefs; who first loved me, then invited me to share with them in community, prayer and mission. As a child I did not recognize evangelization at work in my life. I did recognize love, service, community, prayer and faith.

And now 35 years later, among the early students of Holy Child Jesus School I am in touch with Catholic parents and teachers, with Baptist and Methodist,

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Holiness and Adventist parents, teachers, preachers, exhorters, deacons, trustees and ministers of music. Thirty-five years later, embracing, as we do, a variety of religious traditions, we agree that our years in the Catholic School strengthened our faith and enriched our lives.

At the age of sixteen, I left Holy Child Jesus for high school in Wisconsin. There I was the only "convert", the only Southerner, the only Black in a totally white, Northern, Catholic school environment. I met high school students, young adults, even teachers who have never worked, played, prayed or even talked with persons of other faiths. Nobody seemed to know or care about "my Black/Southern/down-home/Gospel-oriented faith" or inculturation. I was loved and accepted. Still, secretly, I felt very much the outsider. That was thirty years ago, but we know that in some areas Catholic schools with homogeneous populations still exist.

Fortunately for all, however, an increasing number of children from a wide variety of religious, cultural, racial, national and socioeconomic backgrounds are now enjoying the advantages of Catholic education. Students, parents, faculty and staff from a variety of cultural and religious traditions are often able not only to accept but also to support and further the philosophy, purpose and goals of Catholic education. Their presence can only serve to enrich the community that is the Catholic School.

If our children are to be adequately prepared for life in a pluralistic, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural world, they must learn to understand and appreciate the basic religious traditions of the persons with whom they live and work. When we as Catholic students, parents, faculty, staff, administrators, approach believers of other religious traditions with appreciation and reverence we realize their faith and faithfulness. We are inspired by their convictions. We are broadened by their perspectives and challenged by their questions. We learn from their religious experience. And as we work with them for peace and justice, as we cooperate with them in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, teaching the ignorant, empowering the oppressed, we truly share the Good News of the Kingdom.

The presence of persons (students, parents, teachers) from the variety of religious and cultural traditions within the close community of the Catholic school can provide for all our children from their earliest years a supportive environment in which to grow in mutual understanding as well as the opportunity for true ecumenical dialogue and collaboration on an on-going basis.[1] The presence of persons from the variety of traditions can challenge us:

- to be who we say we are as Christian — loving, open, respectful of persons, concerned about the total human community;[2]
- to share the light of faith in the mutuality of evangelization;
- to clarify our own convictions and committment as Catholics;[3]
- to develop attitudes,[4] appreciations and skills requisite to ecumenical and cross-cultural communication and cooperation.

If it is to be spiritually profitable, our coming together must be based on the recognition that all who worship God, *the Great Spirit, the Creator, the One who*

is above us all and seek in His name to live good lives can share a faith that is deep and life-giving;[5] that all committed Christians have accepted and share the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we reflect together on the specific traditions which we embrace, our own ideas, values, and convictions are clarified, redefined and confirmed; our differences are understood; our commonalities are celebrated, and we are empowered for life in an ecumenical age and a pluralistic society.

At the "message level" it is important to provide opportunity for all students to learn from religious leaders of many traditions. This would provide opportunity and encouragement to true ecumenical dialogue as well as opportunity for development of the attitudes, insights and skills requisite to such dialogue.[6] Consider, for example, what we as Catholic educational community might learn from:

- Black American holistic and celebratory spirituality;
- Asian techniques of meditation and prayer;
- the Hispanic tradition of home and family-centered religious education and celebration;
- traditional Native American reverence for all creations of the Great Spirit with consequent endeavor to learn from and live in harmony with Nature;
- the Buddhist and Mennonite practice of dedicating one or more years of young adulthood to full-time service in monastery or missions;
- the Muslim insistence upon the relationship of religious faith and active commitment to sociopolitical involvement.

Consider what would happen if all people of faith were encouraged to enrich the religious education and prayer life of the Catholic school community.

The presence of students from the variety of cultural and religious traditions challenges us as Catholics:

- to free ourselves from the assumption that the Good News is limited to any institutional denominationalism;[7]
- to develop a catechesis that is truly multicultural;[8]
- to develop a liturgy so meaningful, so authentically celebratory, so wedded to reality of life that it can communicate to any person of faith;
- to revitalize our religious education and to speak the Word in language that is meaningful and life-giving to all members of the Catholic school community;[9]
- to provide liturgical and paraliturgical ecumenical experiences utilizing the giftedness of *all* our students;[10]
- to share and celebrate the religious insights and expressions of *all* members of the school community;[11]
- to free our Catholic Christian teachings from the cultural accretions of any single place or time;

- to insure that ritual, gesture, music, preaching are wedded to the real life and culture of all the students;
- to abandon the Catholic ghetto mentality which sometimes seems to operate on the assumption that our faith cannot withstand the challenge of dialogue or even conversation.

If "the Catholic school, as a microcosm of the Church, is . . . to be a truly Christian community—a community of care and concern, of respect and reconciliation, of justice and peace,"[12] we must

- avoid attitudes and terminology which assume the Catholic European-based position as normative and define the other as deviations from that norm (terms like *non-Catholic, non-Christian, non-believers, non-white, minority*);
- learn from the experience of all members of the school community and assure to all a role that is truly integral and participatory;
- devise ways and means to provide the advantage of Catholic education for those in most need—the poor, the disadvantaged, the oppressed;[13]
- integrate our schools so that students, teachers, and parents from the variety of racial, religious, cultural, economic and social backgrounds might have the opportunity to learn and grow, to work and pray together.

If we are convinced that all our students "bring with them a rich heritage and contribute significantly to the environment within the school," then we are bound to give flesh and substance to our conviction.

If all members of the school community are to recognize and respond to one anothers' needs and the needs of the community, school-sponsored programs of service must be participatory rather than paternalistic; must see the needy as brothers and sisters, not strangers or objects of beneficence; must be designed to empower the needy to help themselves and to contribute by their struggles and experience to the common good.

If we are to share the Good News with all our students we must immerse ourselves in the multiplicity of cultures which comprise our school populations. We must learn of Black or Native American or Hispanic or Appalachian tradition—the language, gesture, song, story, ritual—so as to help all our students become comfortable with the diversity they will surely encounter in life. We must speak the Good News in the modalities they best understand. The active participation and cooperation of parents, teachers, and concerned adults from the variety of cultural and religious traditions[14] enable the Catholic school community to affirm and utilize the special giftedness of all its peoples as they work in love and harmony to create a better world.

References

[1]We must come to understand the outlook of our separated brethren. Study is absolutely required for this, and should be pursued with fidelity to truth and in a spirit of good will. *Degree on Ecumenism, para. 9*

Communities of the faithful should, according to the circumstances in which they live, take part in ecumenical dialogue and the other undertakings for the restoring of Christian unity.

Catechesis should, therefore, assist in this cause by clearly explaining the Church's doctrine in its entirety and by fostering a suitable knowledge of other confessions, both in matters where they agree with the Catholic faith, and also in matters where they differ. *General Catechetical Directory, para. 27*

Catechesis can, however, foster ecumenism in a variety of ways: by clearly explaining Catholic doctrine in its entirety and working for the renewal of the Church and its members; by presenting information about other Christians honestly and accurately, avoiding words, judgments, and actions which misrepresent their beliefs and practices; by communicating the divine truths and values Catholics share with other Christians and promoting cooperation in projects for the common good. *National Catechetical Directory, para. 76*

[2]But the Christian community should not be concerned only for itself. Christ did not intend it to live walled off from the world any more than He intended each person to work out his destiny in isolation from others. Fidelity to the will of Christ joins His community with the total human community. "Thus the mission of the Church will show its religious, and by that very fact, its supremely human character." *To Teach As Jesus Did, para. 29*

[3]Catholic belief needs to be explained more profoundly and precisely, in ways and in terminology which our separated brethren too can really understand. *Decree on Ecumenism, para. 11*

[4]There can be no ecumensim worthy of the name without a change of heart. For it is from newness of attitudes, from self-denial and unstinted love, that yearnings for unity take their rise and grow toward maturity. We should therefore pray to the divine Spirit for the grace to be genuinely self-denying, humble, gentle in the service of others, and to have an attitude of brotherly generosity toward them. *Decree on Ecumenism, para. 7*

[5]Millions of people around the globe follow traditional religions, handed down from time immemorial, whose rites and mores generate among them a sense of solidarity. . . .

The Catholic Church regards the positive and enriching aspects of these religions with honor and reverence. In particular it searches for common bonds with religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

This interest should spur catechists to:

1) Present an accurate account of the essential elements of traditional non-Christian religious beliefs, as perceived by their adherents in the light of their own religious experience.

2) Develop an appreciation of their insights and contributions to humanity.

3) Promote joint projects in the cause of justice and peace. *National Catechetical Directory, p. 44*

[6]Likewise, other religions to be found everywhere strive variously to answer the restless searchings of the human heart by proposing "ways" which consist of teaching, rules of life, and sacred ceremonies.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims and must ever proclaim Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom men find the fullness of religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself.

The Church therefore has this exhortation for her sons: prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their society and culture. *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, para. 5*

[7]In this Decree, the Council goes beyond the assertion that the Catholic Church is the true Church to assert that Jesus, in His Spirit, is at work in the Churches and Communities beyond the visible borders of the Catholic Church; the Council asserts that believers in Christ who are baptized are truly reborn and truly our brothers and that God uses their worship to sanctify and save them. *Introduction to The Decree on Ecumenism, The Documents of Vatican II, Guild Press, p. 338*

[8]Even in culturally homogeneous areas and parishes catechesis should be multi-cultural, in the sense that all should be educated to know and respect other cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. *National Catechetical Directory, para. 194*

[9]The language of the particular group should be used in the catechesis of its members: not just its vocabulary, but its thought patterns, cultural idioms, customs, and symbols. Catechetical materials should suit its characteristics and needs. *National Catechetical Directory, para. 194*

[10]In planning Masses for particular cultural, racial, and ethnic groups it is important to take their needs, preferences, and gifts into account. Preparation for inter-group celebrations should involve mutual planning and effort, so that all may profit from the diverse liturgical heritages. *National Catechetical Directory, para. 137*

[11]In certain special circumstances, such as in prayer services "for unity" and during ecumenical gatherings, it is allowable, indeed desirable, that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren. Such prayers in common are certainly a very effective means of petitioning for the grace of unity, and they are a genuine expression of the ties which even now bind Catholics to their separated brethren. *Decree on Ecumenism, para. 8*

[12]Rev. James F. Hawker, p. 8

[13]The unfinished business on the agenda of Catholic schools, like many other schools, also includes the task of providing quality education for the poor and disadvantaged of our nation. Generous, sustained sacrifice is demanded of those whom God has favored in order to make available educational programs which meet the need of the poor to be self-determining, free persons in all areas of individual and social life. *To Teach As Jesus Did, para. 121*

[14]On all levels of education, and particularly on a system-wide basis, Catholic educators should seek actively to cooperate with their public school counterparts and their colleagues in other nonpublic schools, sharing ideas, plans, personnel, technology, and other resources where mutually feasible and beneficial. The possibility of institutional cooperation with other Christian groups in the field of education should be explored. Approached with candor and intelligence, cooperative planning need not threaten the identity or independence of any school system and can benefit all. *To Teach As Jesus Did, para. 126*

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